

Crimes of the Early Popes

By Unknown Author

Edited by Darcy John Bouchard

We now give a rapid summary of the *crimes* and *vices* with which many of the popes disgraced the chair of **St. Peter**; and before we conclude, the reader will see that every *villainy* the imagination can conceive has been practiced by the *vicegerents of God*. *Peculation, theft, cruelty, murder, fornication, adultery*, and incest... not to mention *still darker crimes*, have all been notoriously committed by *the supreme rulers of Christendom*, who sat in the seat of infallibility, and claimed *universal jurisdiction over the thoughts and consciences of mankind*.

St. Damasus (366-84) was the first to assume the title of **Pontiff**. His election was opposed by **Ursicinus**, whose partisans accused Damasus of adultery. [122:1]

Riddle says:

“After some deadly conflicts between the followers of the two rivals, Ursicinus was banished from the city; and a similar sentence was about to be carried into effect against seven presbyters of his party, when the people interfered, and lodged them for safety in one of the churches. But even here they found no shelter from the fury of their opponents. Armed with fire and sword, Damasus, with some of his adherents, both of the clergy and of the laity, proceeded to the place of refuge, and left no less than a hundred and sixty of their adversaries dead within the sacred precincts.” [122:2]

That this was a *massacre* and *not a faction fight* is shown by the fact that on the side of Damasus not a single person was killed. [123:3] **Ammianus Marcellinus**, the contemporary historian of the event, says of the contention between Damasus and Ursicinus:

“I do not deny, when I consider the ostentation that reigns at Rome, that those who desire such rank and power may be justified in laboring with all possible exertions and vehemence to obtain their wishes; since after they have succeeded, they will be secure for the future, being enriched by offerings from matrons, riding in carriages, dressing splendidly, and feasting luxuriously, so that their entertainment surpassed even royal banquets. [123:4]

Damasus gained the title of Auriscalpius Matronarum, ladies' ear-scratcher. [123:5] He died of fever, and the Romish Church still invokes the aid of this saintly vicar of God in fever cases. [123:6]

Sixtus III (432-40): This pope, according to *both* **Baronius** and **Platina**, was *accused of debauching ‘a virgin,’* but was acquitted by a Council under the **Emperor Valentina**, who is said to have referred the pronouncing of the sentence to the Pope himself, “because the judge of all ought to be judged by none.” It was without doubt to establish this maxim that the “acts” of the Council were forged. [123:7]

St. Leo the Great (440-61): Jortin calls him “the insolent and persecuting Pope Leo, who applauded the *massacre* of the **Priscillianists**, and grossly misrepresented them.” [123:8]

Symmachus (498-514): His election was violently opposed by the *antipope Laurentius*, and three Councils were held to decide the *schism*. Accusations of the most heinous crimes were laid against Symmachus.

Bower says:

“This gave occasion to the rekindling of the war between the two parties in Rome; and several priests, many clerks, and a great number of citizens, fell daily in the battles that were fought in the different parts of the city. No regard was shown by either party to rank or dignity; and not even the sacred virgins were spared by the enraged multitude in their fury.” [123:9]

Eunodius declared that the Pope was “judge in the place of the Most High, pure from all sin, and exempt from all punishment. All who fell fighting in his cause he declared enrolled on the register of heaven.” [124:1]

St. Hormisdas (514-23) was a married man, and had a son, who was raised to the *popedom*. He was full of ambition, and insolent in his demands to the emperor, whom he exhorted to the persecution of heretics.

Boniface II (530-32): His election was disputed by the *antipope Dioscorus*. Each accused the other of *simony*, but Dioscorus opportunely died. Boniface “began his pontificate with wreaking his vengeance on the memory of his deceased competitor, whom he solemnly excommunicated, as guilty of simony, when he could not clear himself from the charge, nor retort it on him, as perhaps he otherwise might.” [124:2]

This sentence was removed by **Pope Agapetus**.

Silverius (536-38): He was accused of betraying the city of **Rome** to the **Goths**, and was in consequence expelled from his see.

Vigilius (537-55): He was a deacon elected by *bribery*. He engaged himself to obey the **Empress Theodora**, who gave him *money* to gain the *suffrages of the clergy*. Anastasius tells us that he *killed his own secretary* in a transport of passion, and *caused his own sister's son to be whipped to death*. He is considered to have been *accessory to the banishment and death of Silverius*. When banished himself by the emperor, he speedily repented, in order to save his seat.

Pelagius (555-60) was *accused of poisoning his predecessor*. This is uncertain; but it is certain that, like most of his predecessors and successors, he incited the civil powers to the *persecution of heretics*.

St. Gregory the Great (590-604): According to Gibbon, this pontiff was “a singular mixture of *simplicity* and *cunning*, of *pride* and *humility*, of *sense* and *superstition*.” [124:3]

Jortin's picture is still less flattering:

“Pope Gregory the Great was remarkable for many things -- for exalting his own authority; for running down human learning [125:4] and polite literature; for burning classic authors; for patronizing ignorance and stupidity; for persecuting heretics; for flattering the most execrable princes; and for relating a multitude of absurd, monstrous and ridiculous lies, called miracles. He was an ambitious, insolent prelate, under the mask of humility.” [125:5]

Drazer says that **Gregory** not only *forbade the study of the classics, mutilated statues, and destroyed temples* but also “*burned the Palatine library, founded by Augustus Caesar*.” Gibbon, *however*, throws doubt on this destruction, while admitting that it was generally believed. [125:6]

Gregory does not appear to have been fond of *women and wine*, like so many other popes; but he possessed the *darker vices* of *bigotry* and *ambition*. His congratulations on the *usurpation of the cruel, drunken and lascivious Phocas*, after *a wholesale massacre of the emperor's family*, simply because the successful villain favored the pretensions of Rome (p. 109), are a sufficient proof that Gregory would scruple at nothing to advance the glory of his see.

Sabinian (604-6): Bower says he rendered himself so odious to the Roman people by his *avarice* and *cruelty to the poor*, that they could not forbear abusing him whenever he appeared. In a dreadful famine he *raised the price of corn to exorbitant rates*. He *accused St. Gregory of simony*; but according to **Baronius**, that departed saint having vainly reproved him in three different apparitions for his covetousness, gave him in *a fourth apparition* so dreadful a blow on the head, that he died soon after. [125:7]

Boniface III (607): By flattering Phocas as Gregory had done, he induced him to take the title of universal bishop from the *bishop of Constantinople*, and confer it upon himself and his successors.

Theodorus (642-49): He *commenced the custom of dipping his pen in consecrated wine when signing the condemnation of heretics*, [126:8] thus *sancifying murder with the blood of Christ*. Of **Adeodatus**, **Donus I**, **Agatho**, and **Leo II**, we only know that they carried on fierce contests with the **archbishop of Ravenna** for refusing to acknowledge their supremacy. **Leo II** anathematized his predecessor, Pope Honorius, for heresy. [126:9]

Neither **Benedict II** nor **John V** nor **Conon**, lived a whole year after assuming the tiara.

St. Sergius I (687-701) had to purchase his seat from the **exarch of Ravenna** by *pawning the ornaments of the tomb of St. Peter*. He was *accused of adultery*, but his innocence was strikingly proved; for, upon the child of whose parentage he was accused being baptized when but eight days old, he cried out, “The pontiff Sergius is not my father.” **Bruys**, the French historian of the Papacy, says, “What I find most marvellous in this story is, not that so young a child should speak, but that it should affirm with so much confidence that the pope was not its father.” [126:1]

Constantine (708-15) is said to have *excommunicated the Emperor, Philip Bardanes*, for being *of the same heresy as Pope Honorius*. To oblige Constantine, **Justinian II** *cut out the tongue and blinded the eyes of the*

Archbishop of Ravenna, who refused to pay the obedience due to the apostolic see. [126:2]

St. Gregory II (715-31) was chiefly noted for his *endowing monasteries with the goods of the poor*, and for his *opposition to the Emperor Leo's edict against image worship*. [126:3] Rather than obey the edict, he *raised civil war both in Italy and elsewhere*. He *prayed that Christ might set the Devil on the emperor*, and *approved the barbarous murder of the imperial officer*. [126:4]

Yet, the priests place in the list of saints a pontiff who, to establish the Christian idolatry of image worship, filled Italy with carnage.

Stephen III (768-72): When elected he found on the pontifical throne a lay pope, one Constantine, who, after a violent struggle, was dislodged and punished with the loss of his eyes, [127:5] many of his friends sharing the same fate. [127:6]

Adrian I (772-95) made a league with **Irene**, the murderess of her son, to restore image worship, and presented to **Charlemagne** the pretended donation of Constantine. [127:7] Avarice was the vice of this able pontiff. He left large sums to his successors.

St. Pascal I (817-24): At the **Diet of Compiègne** this pope was charged with being *accessory to the mutilation and murder of two Roman priests*. The Pope *denied the charge*, but refused to deliver up the perpetrators of the crimes, alleging that they belonged “to the family of St. Peter.” [127:8]

Eugenius II (824-27) had the honor of inventing the *barbarous practice of ordeal by cold water*.

Nicholas (858-67) *excommunicated Photius, the Greek patriarch, and the emperor Michael as his abettor*, and *threatened King Lothaire with the ecclesiastical sword* if he suffered any bishop to be chosen without his consent. [127:9]

Adrian II (867-72) was a married priest. He *congratulated Bazilius, the murderer of the emperor Michael*, and entered into alliance with him. [127:1]

John VIII (872-82): The meek and holy nature of this worthy successor of St. Peter may be judged by his ordering the Bishop of Naples to bring him the chief men among the **Saracens** in that city, and cutting their throats in the presence of his legate. [127:2] A letter of John is extant, in which he *justifies Athanasius, Bishop of Naples, for having plucked out the eyes of Sergius, Duke of Naples, who favored the Saracens in despite of the papal anathemas*; he even *cites the Gospel text as to plucking out offending eyes*. **Cardinal Baronius** declares that this pontiff *perjured himself*, and that he rather *deserved the name of a woman than that of a man*. [128:3]

The annals of the Abbey of Fulda relate that John VIII was *poisoned by the relations of a lady whom he had seduced from her husband*. [128:4]

Formosus (891-96) had been *repeatedly excommunicated by John VIII*. He *invited Arnulf, the German emperor, to invade Italy*, which he did, *committing great atrocities*. Formosus, *however*, had a great character for piety. He is said to have been *well-versed in scripture*, and to have *died a virgin in his eightieth year*.

Boniface VI (896): Even according to **Baronius**, he was *a man of most infamous character*. He had been *deposed for his scandalous life*, first from the rank of sub-deacon, and afterward from the priesthood. [128:5]

Stephen VI (896-7) intruded into the See in the room of the intruder Boniface. Being *of the opposite faction to Pope Formosus*, he *caused the body of that pontiff to be taken out of the tomb and to be placed, in the episcopal robes, on the pontifical chair*.

Stephen then addressed the dead body thus:

“Why didst thou, being **Bishop of Porto**, prompted by thy ambition, usurp the **Universal See of Rome**?”

After this *mock trial* Stephen, with the approbation and consent of a Council of bishops, *ordered the body to be stripped, three of the fingers (those used in blessing) to be cut off*, and the *remains to be cast into the Tiber*. At the same Council *all the ordinations of Formosus were declared invalid*. [128:6]

Then followed what Riddle calls *“a rapid succession of infamous popes,”* of whom we may mention that **Leo V** (903) was *deposed and cast into prison* by his chaplain, **Christopher**, who was in turn ejected and imprisoned by **Sergius III** (904-11). This pontiff *also* had been excommunicated by **John VIII**. He was, says Baronius, “the slave of every vice and the most wicked of men.” [128:7]

Riddle says:

“This Sergius III was a monster of profligacy, cruelty and vice in their most shameless and disgusting forms. But it was this very character which made him useful to his party, the duration of whose influence at Rome, could be insured only by a preponderance of physical power, and this again only by violence which

should disdain all restraints of morality and religion. Sergius was the man for this purpose, who, while he lived in concubinage with Marozia, did not hesitate to yield all the treasures of the Roman Church as plunder to his party.” [129:8]

To him succeeded other *paramours* of **Marozia** and of *her mother* the *prostitute Theodora*. **John X**, for instance (914-28), received his chair because he was *the lover of Theodora*, while **Leo VI** and **Stephen VIII** (929-31) were creatures of Marozia. *Adultery and assassination* form the staple of the annals of their pontificates.

John XI (931-36) was the *son of Pope Sergius III. by Marozia*, and, if possible, *he surpassed his parents in crime*. Elected pope at the age of eighteen, **Alberic**, his half brother, *expelled him from Rome and imprisoned their mother Marozia*. **Stephen VIII** (939-942) made himself *so obnoxious to the Romans that they mutilated him*. [129:9]

John XII (956-64), the *son of Alberic*, was the first to change his name, which was originally **Octavian**. He nominated himself pope at the age of seventeen.

Wilks says:

“His profaneness and debaucheries exceeded all bounds. He was publicly accused of concubinage, incest, and simony.”

This pope was *so notorious for his licentiousness that female pilgrims dared not present themselves in Rome*. [129:1] Bower says *that* he had changed the **Lateran Palace**, once the abode of saints, into *a brothel*, and there *cohabited with his father's concubine*; that women were afraid to come from other countries to visit the tombs of the apostles at Rome; that *he spared none*, and had within a few days *forced married women, widows, and virgins to comply with his impure desires*. He was at length *deposed* by **Otho**, at the solicitation of a council of bishops and laymen, *on charges of sacrilege, simony, blasphemy, and cruel mutilation*. He had *deprived one deacon of his right hand and made him a eunuch*. He *put out the eyes of Benedict, his ghostly father, cut off the nose of the keeper of the archives*, and *scourged the Bishop of Spire*. [130:2]

On the deposition of John, Leo VII was put in his place. John *fulminated anathemas* against his opponents, and soon after *died, from a blow on the head while in bed with a married woman*. [130:3]

Jortin remarks *that* “Baronius says, from Luitprandus, that it was the Devil who gave John that blow; but it seems not probable that Satan would have used his good friend in such a manner. It is more likely that it might be the husband of the adulteress.” [130:4]

Mosheim says “that the history of the Roman pontiffs of this century [the tenth] is a history of monsters, a history of the most atrocious villainies and crimes, is acknowledged by all writers of distinction, and even by the advocates of popery.” [130:5]

Boniface VII (974): The old authors in derision call him “**Maliface**.” Having *had his predecessor Benedict murdered*, he *plundered the Basilica and escaped with his spoils to Constantinople*, whence he afterwards *returned and murdered John XIV* (984), then on the papal throne.

Gregory V (996-99) was *turned out of his See by Crescentius*, who elected the *antipope John*. Upon Gregory's restoration *he had this unfortunate creature deprived of sight, cut off his nose, and tore out his tongue*. He then ordered him to be led through the streets in *a tattered sacerdotal suit*, and *mounted upon an ass with his face to the tail, which he held in his hand*. [130:6]

Sergius IV (1009-12): This pope was called “**Os Porci**,” or “**Swine's Mouth**.” Of his doings little is known, but he is asserted to have gravely declared “that the pope could not be damned, but that, do what he would, he must be saved.” [130:7]

Benedict VIII (1012-24) saved the city of Rome from a great storm, which it seems was caused by some Jews. The Jews being immediately executed the storm ceased. [131:8]

John XIX (1024-33) was a layman, brother of Benedict, yet he was raised to the See.

Wilks says:

“It was by gold, and not by imperial power, that the Romans consented to this uncanonical election. The rapacity of this pope was so great that he offered to sell the title of ‘Universal Bishop’ to the see of Constantinople for a sum of money!” [131:9]

By his exactions, debauchery and tyranny, he became so odious to the Romans that he had to flee for his life.

Benedict IX (1033-46): A nephew of the last two pontiffs. Some say he was raised to the papacy at the age of twelve—others, at eighteen. He “*stained the sacred office with murder, adultery, and every other heinous crime*.” [131:1]

Desiderius, afterwards pope under the name of **Victor III**, styles *Benedict the successor of Simon the sorcerer*, and not of Simon the apostle, and paints him as *one abandoned to all manner of vice*. [131:2] Being eager to possess the person and property of a female cousin, he *sold the papacy to John Gratianus*, “the most religious man of his time,” for a sum of money, and consecrated him as **Gregory VI**. Benedict afterwards *poisoned Pope Damasus II*. The Romans, weary of his crimes, expelled him from the city, but he was *reinstated by Conrad*. “But,” says Jortin, “as he continued his scandalous course of life, and found himself despised and detested both by clergy and laity, he agreed to retire, and to abandon himself more freely to his pleasures.” Stipulating therefore to receive a sum of money, he resigned his place to Gratianus, called Gregory VI, and went to live in his own territories. [131:3]

Mosheim calls Benedict IX “*a most flagitious man and capable of every crime*.” [131:4]

We have already seen how **Benedict**, **Sylvester**, and **Gregory**, were alike declared *unworthy of the pontificate*, and **Clement** placed in the See, and by what means **Hildebrand** contrived to extend the papal power. This great pontiff, **Gregory VII** (1073-85), has been *accused of poisoning his predecessors* in order to obtain the popedom, and also of *committing adultery with Matilda, Countess of Tuscany*, who bestowed all her possessions on the pope. But these accusations probably arose from the spite of the many enemies aroused by Hildebrand's high-handed measures.

Pascal II (1099-1118) was *a disciple of Hildebrand*, and inherited his ambition without his talents. He compelled **Henry IV** to abdicate, but on his son **Henry V** marching against him, after a sanguinary struggle, he gave up to the emperor the right of investiture. Afterwards he excommunicated all who should declare his own grant to be valid. [132:5]

Adrian IV (1154-59): The only Englishman who ever became pope. He caused **Arnold of Brescia** to be *burnt at the stake* (1154) for preaching against papal corruption. The **Irish** should remember that it was this pope who, in virtue of the pretended **Donation of Constantine**, made over to **Henry II of England** *the right to take and govern Ireland* on condition of *the pope receiving an annual tribute of one penny for each house*. [132:6]

Alexander III (1159-81): The **Lateran Council** (1179) declared *war against all heretics*, and *a crusade against them was sanctioned by this pontiff*. [132:7]

Clement III (1188-1191) published *the third crusade* (1189).

Innocent III (1198-1216) *also preached a crusade*. He claimed for his **See Universal Empire** and established the **Inquisition** to support the claim. He *excommunicated Philip II of France* and put the whole nation under interdict. Afterwards he placed England under interdict, *excommunicated John*, *bestowed the crown on Philip of France*, and *published a crusade against England*. He *also instituted a crusade against the Albigenses, butchering them by tens of thousands with every circumstance of atrocity*. [132:8]

Gregory IX (1227-41): He formally established the **Inquisition**; and, to support his ambition and the *unbridled luxury of his court, raised taxes in France, England and Germany, excommunicated kings, and incited nations to revolt*; finally causing himself to be *driven from Rome*. [133:9]

Innocent IV (1243-54) *conspired against the life of the Emperor Frederic, through the agency of the Franciscan monks*. To avoid confronting his accuser, he *retired to France*, summoned *a council at Lyons* (1244), and *excommunicated and deposed the emperor*, whom he coolly denominated his vassal. He *also excommunicated the kings of Arragon and Portugal, giving the crown of the latter to the Count of Bologna*. He *persecuted the Ghibellines*, and pretending to have the right of disposing of the crown of the two Sicilies, offered it to **Richard, Earl of Cornwall**, brother to **Henry III of England**. Innocent made exorbitant claims to the bishoprics and benefices in England. [133:1]

Boniface VIII (1294-1303) *had his predecessor, Celestine, put in prison*, where he died. [133:2] He openly *styled himself “King of Kings,” trafficked in indulgences*, and declared all excluded from heaven who disputed his claim to universal dominion. He *persecuted the Ghibellines*, and *ordered the city of Bragneste to be entirely destroyed*. He was *publicly accused of simony, assassination, usury, of living in concubinage with his two nieces and having children by them*, and of *using the money received for indulgences to pay the Saracens for invading Italy*. [133:3]

Clement V (1305-1314) is noted *for his cruel suppression of the Order of Knights Templar*, so as to appropriate their property. He summoned the grand master of the Templars under false pretexts to his court, and issued a bull against the order in which he brought against it the most unfounded and absurd

charges, and finally pronounced its abolition, *having the Grand Master and many leading members burnt alive*. [134:4]

After sharing the spoils of the Templars with the king of France, **Clement V** fixed his court at **Avignon**, and *gave himself publicly to the most criminal debaucheries*. He *preached a new crusade against the Turks* and gave each new crusader the right to release four souls from purgatory.

Dante places him in hell.

John XXII (1316-34): Like his predecessors, he *persecuted and burnt heretics*. He *anathematized the emperor of Germany and the king of France*, and *preached a new crusade*. Money was raised in abundance by the *sale of indulgences*, and was misappropriated by the pope. He left enormous treasures. **Villani**, whose brother was one of the papal commission, states that this *successor of the fisherman* amassed altogether twenty-five million florins. [134:5]

Gieseler says: “He arbitrarily disposed of the Benefices of all countries, chiefly in favor of his own nephews, and the members of his curia.” [134:6]

Urban VI (1378-89): In his time occurred what is known as *the “Great Western Schism,”* which lasted from 1378 till the **Council of Constance** (1414). There were during that time *two popes*, one residing at **Rome** and the other at **Avignon**. But which of the popes was the true one and which the *antipope* has not yet been decided. **Urban VI** was *a ferocious despot*. He *ordered six cardinals*, whom he suspected of opposing him, to be *brutally tortured*. [134:7]

Nor was his competitor, **Clement VII**, behind him in *violence and crime*. For fifty years they and their successors excommunicated one another and excited bloody wars. The *schism*, which *cost thousands of lives*, was *ended by the deposition of John XXIII* (1415), who was found *guilty of murder and incest*. He was accused before the Council of having *seduced two hundred nuns*. **Theodoric de Niem** informs us that he kept *two hundred mistresses in Bologna*, and he is described by his own secretary as *a monster of avarice, ambition, lewdness and cruelty*. [135:8]

The same author says that an act of accusation, prepared against him, presented a complete catalogue of every mortal crime.

Martin V (1417-31): His *crimes were not of a kind to be censured* by a Council of bishops. He had **John Huss** and **Jerome of Prague** *burnt alive*, and *to put down their heresies excited civil war in Bohemia*.

He wrote to the **Duke of Lithuania**:

“Be assured thou sinnest mortally in keeping faith with heretics.”

Eugenius IV (1431-47): His first act was to *put to torture the treasurer of his predecessor, Martin V*. He *seized that pontiff's treasures and sent to the scaffold two hundred Roman citizens, friends of the late pope*. [135:9] The **Council of Basle** was called and *deposed the pope*, setting up an *antipope*, **Felix V**—*of course, civil war and much cruelty followed*.

Paul II (1464-71) broke all the engagements he had made to the conclave prior to his election. He *persecuted with the greatest cruelty and perfidy the Count of Anguillara*. He *strove to kindle a general war throughout Italy*, and *excommunicated the king of Bohemia for protecting the Hussites* against his persecutions. He *also persecuted the Fratricelli*.

“His love of money,” says Symonds, “was such that, when bishoprics fell vacant, he often refused to fill them up, drawing their revenues for his own use, and draining Christendom as a Verres or a Memmius sucked a Roman province dry. His court was luxurious, and in private he was addicted to all the sensual lusts.” [135:1]

The same writer says that “He seized the chief members of the Roman Academy, imprisoned them, put them to the torture, and killed some of them upon the rack.” [135:2] He died suddenly, leaving behind him an immense treasure in money and jewels, amassed by his avarice and extortion. [135:3]

Sixtus IV (1471-84) *strove to excel his predecessors in crime*. According to Symonds,

“He began his career with a lie; for though he succeeded, to that demon of avarice, Paul, who had spent his time in amassing money which he did not use, he declared that he had only found five thousand florins in the papal treasury.”

The historian continues:

“This assertion was proved false by the prodigality with which he lavished wealth immediately upon his nephews. It is difficult even to hint at the horrible suspicions which were cast upon the birth of two of the Pope's nephews and upon the nature of his weakness for them: yet the private life of Sixtus rendered the most monstrous stories plausible, while his public treatment of these men recalled to mind the partiality of Nero for Doryphorus [] the Holy Father himself was wont to say, A Pope needs only pen and ink to get what sum he wants' [] fictitious dearths were created; the value of wheat was raised to famine prices; good grain was sold out of the kingdom, and bad imported in exchange; while

Sixtus forced his subjects to purchase from his stores, and made a profit by the hunger and disease of his emaciated provinces.” [136:4]

Ranke declares:

“He was restrained by no scruple from rendering his spiritual power subservient to his worldly views, or from debasing it by a mixture with those temporary intrigues in which his ambition had involved him. The Medici being peculiarly in his way, he took part in the Florentine troubles; and, as is notorious, brought upon himself the suspicion of being privy to the conspiracy of the Pazzi, and to the assassination which they perpetrated on the steps of the altar of the cathedral: the suspicion that he, the father of the faithful, was an accomplice of such acts! When the Venetians ceased to favor the scheme of his nephew, as they had done for a considerable time, the pope was not satisfied with deserting them in a war into which he himself had driven them; he went so far as to excommunicate them for persisting in it. He acted with no less violence in Rome: he persecuted the Colonnas with great ferocity: he seized Marino from them; he caused the prothonotary Colonna to be attacked, arrested and executed in his own house. The mother of Colonna came to San Celso in Branchi, where the body lay -- she lifted the severed head by the hair, and cried 'Behold the head of my son! Such is the faith of the pope. He promised that if we would give up Marino to him he would set my son at liberty; he has Marino: and my son is in our hands -- but dead! Behold thus does the pope keep his word.'” [136:5]

Jortin says *that* “Sixtus IV erected a famous bawdy-house at Rome, and the Roman prostitutes paid his holiness a weekly tax, which amounted sometimes to twenty thousand ducats a year.” [137:6]

Innocent VIII (1484-92): Schlegel, in his notes to Mosheim, says he “lived so shamefully before he mounted the Roman throne, that he had *sixteen illegitimate children* to make provision for. Yet on the papal throne he played the zealot against the Germans, whom he accused of magic, and also against the Hussites, whom he well-nigh exterminated.” [137:7]

Wilks says:

“He obtained the votes of the cardinals by bribery, and violated all his promises.” [137:8]

The practice of *selling offices* prevailed under him as well as under his predecessors: “In corruption,” says Symonds, “he advanced a step even beyond Sixtus, by establishing a bank at Rome for the sale of pardons. Each sin had its price, which might be paid at the convenience of the criminal: one hundred and fifty ducats of the tax were poured into the Papal coffers; the surplus fell to Franceschetto, the Pope's son.” [137:9]

The Vice-Chancellor of this rapacious pontiff, on being asked why indulgences were permitted for the worst scandals, made answer *that*

“God wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should pay and live.”

It must be added that “the traffic which Innocent and Franceschetto carried on in theft and murder filled the Campagna with brigands and assassins.” [137:1]

The Pope's vices cost him so much that he even pledged the papal tiara as a security for money.

Alexander VI (1492-1503): **Roderic Borgia** was *one of the most depraved wretches that ever lived*. His passions were so unbridled that, having conceived *a liking for a widow and two daughters*, he made them *all subservient to his brutality*.

Wilks calls him “*a man of most abandoned morals, deep duplicity, and unscrupulous ambition. Like his predecessors, he had but one object at heart, the temporal and hereditary aggrandisement of his family.*” [138:2]

Mosheim says:

“So many and so great villainies, crimes and enormities are recorded of him, that it must be certain he was destitute not only of all religion, but also of decency and shame.” [138:3]

This pope, at a certain feast, had fifty courtesans dancing, who, at a given signal, threw off every vestige of clothing and—we draw a veil over the scene!

“To describe him,” says Symonds, “as the **Genius of Evil**, whose *sensualities, as unrestrained as Nero's*, were relieved against the background of flame and smoke which Christianity had raised for fleshly sins, is justifiable.” [138:4]

His besetting vice was sensuality; in oriental fashion he maintained a harem in the Vatican. He invited the Sultan Bajazet to enter Europe and relieve him of the princes who opposed his intrigues in favor of his children.

In regard to his death we follow Ranke:

“It was but too certain that he once meditated taking off one of the richest of the cardinals by poison. His intended victim, however, contrived, by means of presents, promises and prayers, to gain over his head cook, and the dish which had been prepared for the cardinal was placed before the pope. He died of the poison he had destined for another.” [138:5]

Julius II (1503-13) obtained the pontificate by *fraud* and *bribery*, [138:6] and boldly took the sword to extend his dominion. [138:7]

Mosheim says:

“That this Julius II possessed, besides other vices, very great ferocity, arrogance, vanity, and a mad passion for war, is proved by abundant testimony. In the first place, he formed an alliance with the Emperor and the King of France, and made war upon the Venetians. He next laid siege to Ferrara. And at last, drawing the Venetians, the Swiss and the Spaniards, to engage in the war with him, he made an attack on Lewis XII, the king of France. Nor, so long as he lived, did he cease from embroiling all Europe.” [138:8]

Paul III (1531-49) was as much a man of the world as any of his predecessors. He acknowledged an illegitimate son and daughter. [138:9]

The emperor once remonstrated with him on having promoted two of his grandsons to the *cardinalate* at too early an age. He replied that he would do as his predecessors had done -- that there were examples of infants in the cradle being made cardinals. [139:1]

We now close this horrid list of criminals. Since the Reformation the popes have been obliged to live more decently, or at least to conceal their vices instead of flaunting them before the world. Should the Protestants object that they are in no way responsible for the crimes of the Papacy, we shall cheerfully concede the plea; but at the same time we beg to remind them that Catholics are also Christians, and that the historian must deal with the whole system through all the centuries. Besides, as Michelet observed, Protestantism is after all only an estuary, and Catholicism the great sea.

Editorial Endnote

In September 1540, **Pope Paul III** approved the foundation of a military order (Latin: *militaris ordo*) by **St. Ignatius Loyola**, a Spanish soldier-turned-mystic, called the **Society of Jesus**—and the **Jesuit Order** was born. Under Ignatius' charismatic leadership, the Society of Jesus grew quickly.

Note: The Jesuits, who are not above getting involved in politics, have always been distrusted for their control to the pope and papal power in independent nations' religious and political affairs.